

Camden Downtown Master Plan Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The following are some questions we have received. If you have a question that is not listed here, let us know so we can include it.

1. The document is very long. Is there a shorter version?

It is a very comprehensive and thorough document. However, the Master Plan is designed so you can choose which topics you want to learn about and how much detail you want to read.

There are 4 Chapters that focus on the major topics, and each one of these chapters has a summary:

1. Economic Revitalization, Funding & Implementation (pages 22-23)
2. Streetscapes, Parking & Circulation (pages 24-26)
3. Buildings (page 27)
4. Citizen Participation (pages 28 -30)

If you want more detail about any of those topics, you can go to the specific chapter in the report.

2. Where can I find the Downtown Master Plan?

In an attempt to save money and be environmentally conscious, we did not print large quantities of the Master Plan.

The Downtown Master Plan is available:

- at the Camden Public Library to read onsite or to check-out
- at the Camden Town Office to read onsite
- on the Town's website www.camdenmaine.gov (click on Downtown Master Plan)

3. Now that the Downtown Master Plan has been completed, what's next?

The Master Plan needs to be accepted and adopted by the Camden Select Board. It was presented to them on April 17. The Select Board did not act on it that night because they wanted to give citizens sufficient time to read it and become familiar with it. The Select Board will consider the Master Plan at their meeting on ***Tuesday May 15, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in the Washington Street Conference Room.*** This will be the opportunity for the public to comment on the Plan, ask questions, and offer ideas. The Select Board will then decide whether to accept the Plan.

The Downtown Master Plan does not require a Town Meeting vote to be adopted. This is a planning document which provides a roadmap for increasing economic development and various improvements in the downtown. If adopted by the Select Board, many of the ideas contained in the report, especially those that require funding will go through the

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normal Town approval processes of Budget approval, and Planning Board and Select Board public hearings.

4. How will the projects in the Master Plan be paid for? Will my taxes go up?

The Downtown Master Plan contains information about ways to fund the projects that do not come from property taxes, such as public and private grants and loans.

The Camden voters showed a lot of foresight when they approved the Downtown Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District and the Business Highway TIF District in February 2010. Private sector investment is essential. As more development takes place in the downtown, the TIF funds will increase. These funds will provide matching funds for grants, and can also pay for debt service for public improvements in the downtown.

Regarding whether your taxes will go up to pay for recommendations in the Downtown Plan, that depends on what projects citizens want to do and how quickly people want to implement the plan. If there are projects the community would like to implement and there are no grants or other funds to pay for them, voters could be asked to approve funding through the annual budget process or to approve a bond issue.

Please see the Master Plan section funding strategies starting on page 39 to better understand some of the various funding resources.

5. Who decides the priority of projects?

The Downtown Master Plan is a Town-led project created through community involvement and with the guidance of a Work Group consisting of:

- Camden's Community & Economic Development Advisory Committee (CEDAC)
- Camden Downtown Business Group Executive Board
- Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce

If the Select Board adopts the Master Plan on May 15, the next step will be implementing the plan. The Work Group has agreed to continue its efforts of engaging the community and advising the Select Board on which recommendations to get started on. One of the reasons for doing a Master Plan was to give the Select Board good information to establish priorities and develop a well-planned strategy to accomplish priorities.

It is very important to know that most recommendations included in the Downtown Master Plan will require that they go through the normal Town approval process of budget approval, and Planning Board, Select Board public hearings.

6. What we need in Camden is more good jobs! How does the Plan address that?

At the first community meeting held in January, the top hope of the participants was to preserve Camden's quality of life. The top concern was jobs: good paying, year-round

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jobs. The downtown plays an important role as a job center. Job creation doesn't happen overnight. A community needs to have the necessary foundation in place to attract economic development and new investment. The Master Plan does include many recommendations on ways we can attract and increase employment opportunities which include providing incubator space for start-up businesses, fully using our creative economy assets, and recognizing the use of technology to connect us to the global economy.

7. Parking is a problem, especially during certain times of the year. Does the Master Plan address this?

Yes! Chapter 2 pertains to parking. The summary is on page 24-26. Also, the citizen survey asked people about parking (Page 222-223). About 60% of the respondents said Camden has enough parking except maybe in the middle of the summer.

The Town recently was able to add about 120 new spaces for public parking in the downtown thanks to the generosity of Matt Orne, owner of property at the Knox Mill. The Mill does not need all of the parking area. Mr. Orne knew the Town needed additional parking, so he offered to allow the Town to use this parking area as a test to see if it relieved the parking pressure in the downtown. The Select Board approved a license agreement on April 17 to use the parking lot for 3 years at \$1.00 per year. This will provide visitor parking, provide all-day parking to make it easier for employees who work in the downtown to park, and free up parking on the street for visitors and customers.

8. I didn't see it in the report, but is the "bridge over the falls" project one of the recommendations in the Master Plan?

There are a lot of projects that have been talked about for years that are not specifically included in the Master Plan. The Master Plan does not include information about a bridge over the falls in Camden Harbor. The Master Plan does recommend that the Town do a better job of defining a harbor walk and a river walk. Not only are these attractive amenities in Camden, but such pathways can connect the various areas of downtown to one another without the use of autos.

The Camden Select Board included the bridge as one of its long range goals. This is a separate document from the Downtown Master Plan (see page 12 of the Plan). It is not funded or approved at this time.

9. I read that Camden has been selected as a "Downtown Network Community" – what is that?

Camden was recently designated as a Downtown Network Community. This was a competitive process. It is good timing for the completion of the Downtown Master Plan. The designation will allow Camden to receive free technical assistance about ways to

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implement the Master Plan, as well as make us eligible for grants that we wouldn't be eligible to receive without being a Downtown Network Community.

Once a town is designated as a Downtown Network Community it has two years to decide if it wishes to be a Main Street Maine community (such as Bath, Rockland, and others). Camden will evaluate this over the next two years to determine if we should apply for that designation. To learn more about these programs, visit www.mdf.org and click on "Maine Downtown Center".

10. Who should I contact if I have other questions?

Please contact any of the Select Board members, or the Town Staff:

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